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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the practice of student participation in academic decisionmaking at the College of the Holy Cross. Emphasis is placed on the evolution of the program, practice and evaluation, academic administration, and student participation. A 28-item bibliography is included. (MJM)

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STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC DECISION MAKING: A Liberal Arts College Perspective

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A Paper Prepared for
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INTRODUCTION

The history of student participation in academic decision making is sometimes described as having its beginnings in the privileges and rights granted to students in the university charters of twelth-century Europe. The governance of Plato's Academy, however, does not seem to have been excessively magisterial, so it may be that the concept of student as participant and not merely consumer enjoys a very long tradition in Western higher education.

Whatever the historical precedents, colleges and universities in the United States, with a few exceptions, were not inclined to include students within the formal structures of institutional governance. Still, many of the oldest colleges could point to particular examples in their past where students had been a strong force for change or reform. The rise and growth of undergraduate fraternities, particularly in the East, was largely occasioned by student dissatisfaction with poorly managed dormitory accommodations. At some institutions students organized literary clubs (complete with private libraries) to compensate for uninspired teaching and highly restrictive library regulations.

> The founding of the Yale Literary Magazine in 1837, the first inter-collegiate baseball game between Amherst and Williams in 1859, the beginnings of an elaborate system of student government at the University of California early in the present century, the girls' smoking rooms set aside at Bryn Mawr in 1925 --

> these are movements in American academic history that are pertinent to an understanding of the American student today. (Rudolph)

This paper will examine the practice of student participation at one liberal arts institution in New England: The College of the Holy Cross (est. 1843). In September of the academic year 1972-1973 the College undertook a review and evaluation of the mode of student participation in academic governance as it had developed over a five-year period. My status, during this review, as a Fellow in the American Council on Education's Academic Administration Internship Program afforded an appropriate opportunity to reflect on the practice of student participation at one institution and to consider some of the wider implications for academic administrators.

EVOLUTION

Throughout its history, the College of the Holy Cross has paid deep respect to the disciplined and rigorous traditions of Jesuit education. Characteristically, it came late to the reform movements which swept across higher education in the United States from time to time.

Until the decade of the 60's, the very nature and organization of the institution provided a high degree of association between administrators, faculty members and students. For the most part, everyone shared the same religious tradition and the same general expectations where the College was concerned. The Jesuits who were administrators and faculty members at the institution, also lived in the student residences, acted as prefects for the students in the chapel, dining hall, on the playing fields, during study hours, and even on off-campus excursions. Faculty members were confessors and counsellors to the students as well as academic advisors. The situation was such that, with few exceptions, the students knew the faculty at very close range and, in turn, were known by the faculty -- who, formally and informally, were expected to spend the greater part of a school day in the company of students.

Even so, student representation was not totally unheard of at the College, and, at least from the turn of the century, students were elected to represent the student body before the

the administration. Student concerns at the time, of course, ran towards matters of diet and the daily schedule rather than academic decisions as such.(Gratton and Meagher) After World War II the College administration lent further encouragement to the formation of a student government. In time, this organization included a student committee on academic affairs, curriculum study groups, and a committee responsible for the circulation of student evaluations of courses and instructors.

In November, 1966, the Educational Policy Committee (composed of the President, the Dean, and five elected faculty members) proposed the start of joint meetings, on a regular basis, with the student committee on academic affairs. Within a year, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) urged other faculty committees to seek ways of involving student participation in their deliberations. Students were formally appointed to those faculty committees which dealt with issues directly related to student interests in October, 1968.

Recognizing that "students have a legitimate interest in the formation of academic and other policies affecting student life at Holy Cross," the faculty, at the Regular Faculty Meeting of May 6, 1968, voted to grant membership and full voting rights in the Faculty Meeting to those students serving on faculty committees. On the same occasion, the student government was invited to appoint two students to participate in the meetings of the EPC, but <u>without</u> a vote.

One year later, May, 1969, the faculty voted membership and voting rights in the EPC to two duly elected students, the right of all students serving on College and Faculty Committees to attend, speak and vote at all Regular and Special Faculty Meetings, and the establishment of Student Advisory Committees in each academic department. These policies were to be implemented for a two-year trial period.

The Trustees of the College, in 1970, made provision in their By-Laws, for the election by the Trustees, each year, of one member from the graduating class to serve a two-year term, commencing after graduation.

When, in the Spring of 1971, the faculty met to discuss the future course of student participation, an ad hoc Committee on College Governance had issued an appraisal of the policies to date. At the same time, the students submitted to the faculty a proposal calling for an increase in student representation in the Faculty Meeting to the level of twenty-five percent of the total membership (this would be the equivalent at any one time to one-third of the total number of the faculty in the Meeting), and proposing that students have full rights as members in the Meeting, except that they would not vote in elections of faculty members to committees. This proposal was defeated; a substitute motion later passed which simply extended the duration of the existing policies for student participation

for another academic year but allowed for an increase of students in the Faculty Meeting to twenty percent of the total membership. The additional student members, it was agreed, were to be chosen through a process of democratic election using the student houses as the basic unit.

Again in the Spring of 1972, the students went before the faculty and proposed that their participation in academic governance be written into The Statutes of the Faculty. The faculty agreed to incorporate into the Statutes that mode of student participation in College and Faculty Committees which had been continued on a trial basis since 1968. The proposal to grant statutory permanence to student participation in the Faculty Meeting, however, was defeated, and the faculty voted, instead, to continue with the existing trial policy for another academic year. Until certain issues regarding the role of the faculty in the governance of the College were resolved, many faculty members (including some who were favorable to the concept of student participation) were unwilling to support the student proposal.

Early in the academic year 1972-1973, the EPC initiated a formal evaluation of student participation. This was in response to a motion, approved by the faculty at the end of the previous academic year, calling for an evaluation before the issue of student participation was brought to the faculty again.

The procedures set up by the EPC attempted to: (1) review the actual practice of student participation; (2) provide an assessment of the value of such participation; (3) make recommendatios for future action in connection with student participation. The EPC submitted its complete report to the faculty in March, 1973. Shortly thereafter, the faculty voted to grant statutory permanence to student participation in the Faculty Meeting.

PRACTICE AND EVALUATION

As in most other institutions of higher education, student participation at Holy Cross, since 1968, has focused on three specific areas: membership and voting rights on College and Faculty Committees; membership and voting rights in the Faculty Meeting; membership and voting rights in the Student Advisory Committees in each department.

College and Faculty Committees. College Committees are those which do not report to the faculty, but rather to an administrative officer of the College appointed by the Trustees, e.g., the President, or Dean of Students, and whose composition and method of selection are not primarily a responsibility of the faculty. Students have served as voting members of the following College Committees: Athletic Council, Budget Committee, Campus Center Advisory Committee, College Judicial Board, Film Series Committee, Lectures and Concerts Committee, Student Activities Committee, and Student Personnel Policy Committee.

Faculty Committees are those which report directly or indirectly (through the EPC or Dean) to the faculty and whose composition and method of selection are primarily a responsibility of the faculty. Students have served as voting members of the following Faculty Committees: Admissions Committee, Curriculum Committee, Educational Policy Committee, and Library Committee.

In most instances, the Statutes allow for a minimum of

one and a maximum of three elected students on each committee, with the actual determination left to the committee. The mode of election or appointment of students to the committees is the responsibility of the student government.

As might be expected, participation and initiative on the part of students has varied from committee to committee and from student to student. Some committees meet infrequently; others meet frequently but have a low campus profile; still others meet frequently and are regarded as very influential. The degree to which students experience direct participation in decision making, therefore, may differ considerably.

In proceeding with their evaluation, the EPC asked both the chairmen of the committees mentioned above and the student members of the committ ees to identify what they regarded as the major assets and the major deficiencies of student involvement in the work of the committees. Each chairman was also requested to consult with the faculty members of the committee before replying to the EPC.

The chairmen of the committees were unanimously in favor of the practice of having students serve on their committees and several chairmen indicated that they could not now conceive of their committees functioning effectively without student members. The chairman of the Budget Committee, for example, explained that each student member of the committee had

> access to all budgetary information, receives complete budget data monthly and is charged with the responsibility of preparing for the Finance Committee (a Standing Committee of the Trustees) income and expense projections based on information available to all members.
>
> As Chairman, I do not consider the Budget Committee complete without student participation and would strongly recommend that this practice be continued.

The majority of committee chairmen, moreover, were enthusiastic in their praise of the high quality of performance on the part of student members. In enumerating the positive contributions of the students to the Library Committee, the Chairman of that committee commented:

> If the Library Committee can serve as a model, what its experience indicates is that successful participation depends largely upon the maturity of the individual, upon his ability to work along with faculty members, and it depends, too, upon the student's being genuinely interested in that facet of the College to which the committee addresses itself.

Some committee chairmen pointed out, however, that while student members had made substantial contributions in the area of advancing opinions, they were, at times, deficient in sharing some of the more onerous aspects of committee work, e.g., the gathering of data and preparation of reports. One chairman observed that student committee members lacked sufficient preparation prior to participation in committee meetings.

The student committee members, in responding to the EPC, defended the importance of student participation in the work of the committees. They reported satisfaction in being regarded as

full and equal members on these policy-setting bodies. Some students made mention of a lack of familiarity with the history and function of a given committee prior to their term of membership. They indicated that this deficiency could be remedied by a wider education in committee responsibilities and a study of the minutes of past committee meetings.

The EPC, in reviewing the responses of committee chairmen and student members, concluded that the existing mode of participation on College and Faculty Committees had, on the whole, proved very successful and recommended only minor changes:

1. That those committees which do not have students as regular committee members be permitted to invite the participation of students on an ad hoc basis whenever it is judged that such participation is important.
2. That the term for which a student may be elected to a committee be one year.

It appears that the persuasion that originally prompted student involvement in these committees, namely, that students have a definite stake in the formulation of policies affecting admission procedures, the budget, the curriculum, student personnel policies, etc., now enjoys wide acceptance among faculty and students. There is general agreement, as well, that the present number of students who sit on these committees assures participation at a level consistent with student interest and competence. The number of student members is never greater than the number of faculty members, and, in most cases, is not equal.

The present method of electing student members would seem to satisfy two important considerations: it guarantees a fair and open process of selection while insuring that competent students will be chosen for committee positions.

Student Participation in the Faculty Meeting. In trying to assess the quality and extent of student participation in the Faculty Meeting since 1968, the EPC made use of the minutes and transcripts of the Meetings.

In the five-year period, students participating in the Faculty Meeting addressed themselves to a rather wide variety of issues: elective courses for Freshmen, a review of terminal contracts, the size of the College enrollment, career recruitment policies, the academic calendar, the elimination of the core curriculum, the link between rank and tenure, athletic policies, ROTC, problems of the black community on campus, etc. The minutes and transcripts of the Meetings since 1968 revealed that, on an average, five or six statements from the floor, during the course of a two-hour meeting, were attributed to student participants.

As on other campuses across the nation, a few issues, over the five-year period, elicited considerably more participation from student members in the Faculty Meeting: military recruitment of campus, the College involvement at the time of the Cambodian crisis, and ROTC on campus. Three other issues sparked

more than average discussion among students in the Faculty Meeting: the Freshman Advisory Program, the role of the Student Advisory Committees in each department, and the percentage of student representation in the Faculty Meeting.

In the first years of student participation at the Meetings, it was the same (relatively few) students who would rise to speak. At that time, the student members in the Meeting were appointed by the student government. When the percentage of student participants in the Meetings was increased, members of the student body were elected rather than appointed. Thereafter a greater number of students entered into the discussions and their statements reflected a wider representation of campus viewpoints than seemed to be the case in previous years.

Attendance figures for student participants at Faculty Meetings have been quite high, averaging between seventy-five and eighty percent of those eligible to attend and comparing favorably with faculty attendance.

One of the early concerns voiced about student participation in the Faculty Meeting was the question of whether or not there was sufficiently broad-based student representation in the actual election of students to attend Faculty Meetings. In the course of their evaluation, the EPC requested information from the student government as to the number of students who voted in the elctions. While the student government could not furnish

hard data, it was estimated that a "30-50 percent turn-out had been involved in the election of the seven 'at-large' seats" and estimates for the house elections ranged from "over 50 percent" to "close to 100 percent participation."

The EPC noted that the two most serious objections on the part of faculty over the issue of granting statutory permanence to student participation in the Faculty Meeting had centered on:

1. The question of whether twenty percent of the total membership constituted too high a percentage of students;
2. The question of whether the role of faculty participation in College governance should be more clearly defined before giving statutory permanence to student participation.

On the basis of its evaluation, the EPC reached a consensus that another proposal calling for statutory permanence of student participation in the Faculty Meeting should be recommended to the faculty. As already noted above, the faculty voted to accept this proposal in March, 1973.

Student Advisory Committees. From the time of their creation in 1969, the Student Advisory Committees (SAC), in each department, have concerned themselves primarily with the preparation of recommendations for tenure, promotion, or reappointment for all appropriate faculty members. It has been the practice of each departmental SAC to distribute a uniform questionnaire, at the close of each semester, to the students

in each course offered through the department. The SAC then tabulates the results of the returned questionnaires and submits an unsigned copy of the statistical summary as well as an unsigned copy of the written SAC opinion to the faculty member under consideration through the department chairman. Statistical summaries as well as signed majority and minority opinions on each faculty member are also submitted by the SAC to the Dean and President through the department chairman.

Additional responsibilities for the SAC have varied from department to department. In a majority of departments, the student chairman of the SAC has participated in departmental meetings and served on departmental committees, sometimes in an advisory role only, and sometimes with full voting rights. SAC members, other than the chairman, assisted in various capacities at the discretion of the department. In some instances, the department made use of the SAC in evaluating and ranking candidates for faculty positions.

SAC committee members are elected by the student majors in each department. Each SAC consists of seven student members; they elect their own chairman.

In its evaluation of the Student Advisory Committees, the EPC consulted all departmental chairmen, all SAC chairmen, and thirty faculty members selected by the EPC to provide a broad representation of faculty opinion.

All department chairmen reported on the major assets and deficiencies of the SAC, some at great length. In addition to the reports from individual departmental chairmen, the EPC held a joint meeting with the department chairmen as a group in order to discuss issues relating to the practice of the SAC.

Chairmen were unanimous in viewing the SAC as providing both a means of giving the department the student point of view on topics of concern to the department, and a channel for presenting departmental opinions to the student majors. In addition to the contribution made by the SAC in the evaluation of faculty in each department, several chairmen cited the work of the SAC in curriculum planning within departments. Most chairmen agreed that the SAC performed especially valuable service in meeting with candidates under consideration for hiring within the department. Some chairmen remarked that student opinion in this regard was an important factor in the decision to hire candidates for faculty positions. These chairmen also thought there was a real benefit to the prospective faculty member in being interviewed by students.

The most serious complaints about the SAC, from the viewpoint of departmental chairmen, were concerned with the procedures for the evaluation of faculty. The techniques used by the SAC in compiling data for recommendations in the cases of tenure, promotion, and re-appointment consist of a uniform questionnaire

distributed to students registered for courses in the department and oral reports elicited by SAC members. Nearly every chairman agreed that the uniform questionnaire currently in use needed revision. Suggestions that the questionnaire was methodologically deficient, vague, and insufficiently linked to the criteria set for tenure, promotion, and re-appointment in the Statutes, were commonplace. Most chairmen believed that the questionnaire should be shorter and more discriminating; some also argued that it should be designed by the faculty.

There was widespread agreement among the chairmen that student response to the questionnaire was inadequate. In the first years of the SAC, the number of students responding had been substantial, but there had been a marked decline. One department chairman argued that the SAC recommendations

> should not be passed on to the administration unless there is an effective sample size, for example, a 75% return. This figure may seem high but the difficulty with the sample poll taken is that it is information gathered without due regard for obtaining a random sample. In a number of professional institutes involved in faculty evaluation, professors have made studies of correlations between data and actual performance and have contended that the data is not very useful unless a return of above 75% is made by the students.

Some chairmen suggested that the students not make recommendations on tenure, promotion, and re-appointment. A few chairmen argued that the SAC written reports should have more limited distribution and that only the statistical sum-

maries, derived from the questionnaires, should be passed on to the Dean and President. The SAC written reports, it was proposed, should not go beyond the senior members of the department for use in decisions regarding tenure, promotion, and reappointment. The Dean, on the other hand, expressed himself to the EPC in favor of receiving the SAC written reports. To do otherwise, he maintained, would limit the Dean in making recommendations to the President as required of him by the Statutes. The Dean pointed out to the departmental chairmen that if the faculty member in a given department believe the SAC report is deficient in any way, they are free to point this out in their own report.

Many chairmen suggested that the composition of the SAC membership was in need of improvement and that some procedure for securing greater continuity of membership and an increase in student participation in the election of SAC members was in order.

Faculty members, consulted by the EPC with regard to the Student Advisory Committees, favored retention of this sort of student participation. One faculty member commented:

> Access to student opinion at department meetings reduces faculty isolation from the student's world. I have found student representatives to be particularly honest and open about actual student practices.

Like the departmental chairmen, faculty members found

fault with the current unifrom questionnaire. Some argued that the questionnaire failed to measure true teaching effectiveness, ignoring substance in favor of enthusiasm, or failing to allow for different teaching styles. Numerous reservations were voiced about the SAC written reports and the "weight" attached to them; some advocated the elimination of the written reports completely.

The student chairmen of the SAC, in responding to the questions put to them by the EPC, stressed the importance of maintaining a formal student representation within each department both in order to assist in the evaluation of faculty and to be heard in matters relating to the curriculum.

> Students benefit or suffer from tenure decisions more than any other members of the community and students can best evaluate the teaching effectiveness of their professors,

remarked one SAC chairman.

The students were quick to acknowledge serious deficiencies in the present procedures of the SAC, however, and they, too, thought that the questionnaire should be revised and that some provision was needed for increased student response so as to lend greater credibility to the data derived from the questionnaires. The students also pointed out certain difficulties arising from a lack of continuity in the membership of the SAC from year to year.

After completing its evaluation of the SAC, the Educa-

tional Policy Committee went to the faculty with a proposal that each department continue to have a Student Advisory Committee. The proposal, acting upon suggestions from department chairmen, faculty members and SAC chairmen, included the following points:

1. Specific modifications aimed at improving the selection and continuity of SAC members.
2. Two members (the chairman and one other) of the SAC shall participate by right at all regular departmental meetings and each shall have a vote. The presence and participation of the remaining SAC members (but without voting rights) are at the option of the department.
3. On the basis of a questionnaire, which shall be uniform for all departments and which may be supplemented at each department's SAC discretion, the SAC will assist in the evaluation of all faculty members. The SAC shall administer the questionnaire during a class meeting in the last week of each semester.
4. The department chairman will forward copies of the SAC reports and recommendations to the Dean.
5. In cases where questions of procedure between the SAC and the department cannot be mutually resolved, the Dean shall act as arbitrator.
6. A new questionnaire would be authorized by the EPC after further consultation with an ad hoc Committee on the Questionnaire (composed of faculty and students).

ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Effective academic leadership, it is often suggested, relates closely to the administrator's ability to draw together into the decision making councils of his institution those persons affected by a decision -- whether their participation establishes the decision or not. Unless there is adequate provision made for each of the component parts of an institution to recognize clearly its role in the pursuit of the common goal, that institution cannot be well governed.

The practice and evaluation of student participation at the College of the Holy Cross raised the perennial questions: What is the "proper" role of students in decision making? Who decides what?

It must be stated at the outset that student participation is a complex problem. Colleges and universities, especially those with long traditions, develop a certain ideological view of purposes and relationships which, over the years, gives a measure of stability to an institution. As noted earlier, this ideology has not readily provided guidance as to acceptable ways in which students might participate in U.S. institutions of higher education. On the one hand, tradition regards students as too immature to assume the responsibilities of the decision-maker; on the other hand, students have, infact, been consulted and their counsel heeded to the benefit of institutions.

There is evidence that as early as the mid-1930's, stu-

dents participated in faculty committees dealing with matters pertaining to student life in approximately half of the nation's colleges and universities. (Hand)

When, in the mid-50's, the American Council on Education conducted a survey of student participation in institutional administration and policy making, the study concluded that student participation was "an accepted fact on some campuses, an unrealistic proposition on others, but on many others a subject of serious study and discussion." (Lunn)

A 1963 survey of 850 accredited colleges and universities showed that about sixty percent of these institutions included students on policy making committees in areas other than matters of student life. (Williamson and Cowan)

The 1966 AAUP statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, while acknowledging the complexity of the situation and possible difficulties, urged that

> When students in American colleges and universities desire to participate responsibly in the government of the institution they attend, their wish should be recognized as a claim to opportunity, both for educational experience and for involvement in the affairs of their college or university. Ways should be found to permit significant student participation within the limits of attainable effectivness.

That the issue of student participation is not a simple one becomes clear when administrators and faculty members who oppose the concept state their arguments. Viewed as a whole,

the objections of those who find serious difficulty with student participation fall under two main headings: (1) students lack sufficient competency; (2) students lack sufficient responsibility. Both arguments surfaced in the reports and discussions of student involvement at Holy Cross and both have been articulated on other campuses and in educational journals and monographs.

Competency. There is, first of all, the view that students are too immature to understand the very process of decision making. Student conceptions of who has the power and the authority to make what decisions, how an institution is organized, financed, and operated, are often very incomplete and inaccurate. As a result, their understanding of how change or reform occurs can tend to the simplistic and their tolerance of complexity can be so minimal as to deny good faith to any view other than their own perception of a given situation.

Adminiministrators and faculty members, hard prssed for time and sensitive to the urgency of certain situations, may well question the real need and desirability of having to give additional time to clarifyingand explaining the most basic procedures of academic governance to student participants.

Not infrequently, in the evaluation of present practices of student involvement at Holy Cross, the point was made that committee chairmen, or department chairmen, have to spend

time, each year, introducing new student committee members to the procedures that must be observed.

Competency, it is stressed, means possession of that requisite knowledge and experience that makes intelligent and rational participation in decision making possible. Can a student be said to have such competency in the area of academic policy making? How can students be said to have the competency to participate in decisions on, for example, whether students should take four or five courses a semester, or whether examinations should be given, or whether the pass/fail option should be extended?

Charles Frankel, of Columbia University, has argued that, by definition, the student is an apprentice in the academic community and cannot be said to have the necessary credentials to justify the exercise of equal influence with the faculty or the administration in the area of decision making.

> Learning is a hierarchical affair, as the elementary symbolism of "degrees" attests. It is not possible to make sense of the idea of learning unless the elementary truism is recognized that some people know more than other people, and ought, in consequence, to have more power with regard to the government of the affairs of the learned community.

Colleges exist, the argument goes, because some people know more than other people. "Faculty are those who instruct and those who must decide on what to instruct. Students are those who receive instruction and who participate in the in-

structional process." (Kerlinger) In this connection, attention is sometimes called to the fact that it is only recently that faculty members themselves have been able to exercise the competency in academic decision making that is rightly theirs. This point was made more than once in discussions on student participation at Holy Cross.

Under the heading of "competency" one might include the objection that students simply cannot be said to have sufficient experience and access to information essential for effective participation. The involvement of students in the evaluation of faculty members for tenure, promotion, or re-appointment has most frequently evoked this particular objection. Some faculty members have called into the question the competency of students to pass judgment on all but a very limited area of their teaching effectiveness. One study of student evaluations of teachers indicated that students rate most highly instructors from whom they learn least. (Rodin)

> Aside from their anonymity, and therefore basic irresponsibility, student evaluations are not likely to inform the professor or his departmental colleagues or his dean of things they do not already know. (Fellman)

Because they lack sufficient competency in the area of academic decision making, it has been urged that student participation be clearly defined so as to include only the traditional areas of student government, such as student discipline,

dormitory regulations, extracurricular activities, social affairs, and the like.

> To a great many faculty members, student power demands involving shared power over curriculum, faculty hiring and promotions, and admissions to the institution appear to be nothing less than a bold and unwarranted intrusion or the incompetent (the students) into an area best left to the professionals (the faculty). (Powell)

Responsibility. Other serious objections against formal student participation in academic decision making may be grouped under the heading of "responsibility." Responsibility is understood to mean that those who make decisions have to be accountable for the implications and consequences of those decisions. While student viewpoints should be given a hearing, decisions should be left to the faculty and administration since responsibility rests squarely on their shoulders.

One difficulty with student efforts in participation arises from the fact that, precisely because they are students, their contribution lacks continuity. A student is a member of a transient population while faculty members, deans, and presidents, presumably, are not. Decisions affecting the institution should be made by that core of committed persons whose life patterns are closely bound up with the success and continued existence of the institution. Students, obviously, do not fall into this category.

Still another question with regard to student responsi-

bility is put forward by those who must be concerned with the mendicant quality of a college or university. From the very start, American institutions of higher education have had to depend on the charitable impulses of the populace for support. A private college, like Holy Cross, must be particularly attentive to public interpretation of its decisions. At a time when many colleges are experiencing severe economic difficulties, Holy Cross has to be concerned with giving evidence of strength and efficient administration. When its students decide to invite Daniel Berrigan, Jesuit priest and anti-war activist, to be a commencement speaker, there is necessarily the risk of alienating a traditional source of financial support to the college. Such decisions are noted not only by alumni but also by the public at large. In The Politics of the Private College, W. Max Wise points out:

> College students are, of course, less aware of the mendicant quality of the relationship of the college to the society and more willing to ignore the possible consequences of alienation of support. Furthermore, they are inclined to view such questions in moral terms and to believe that any compromise of absolute autonomy of the college is a denial of basic purposes.

Students cannot have it both ways, the argument goes. If they wish a strong, influential role in decision making, they must be willing to share a real measure of accountability.

Responsibility should be evidenced by a willingness on the part of students to give high priority among their interests

and in the day-to-day allotment of their time to the long and often arduous preparations necessary for decision making. Those who oppose the concept of student participation maintain that the very nature of the academic and social commitments of students precludes the possibility of assuming such responsibility.

Granted that the issue of student participation in decision making is complex, and the objections raised often serious, what justification does the academic administrator have in lending support and encouragement to policies such as those in practice at Holy Cross and elsewhere? While the very fact of faculty approval and trustee acceptance confers a certain legitimacy upon such practices, what are the real implications for the administrator who must implement and cooperate with these policies?

Where it is possible for a college administrator to leave his office on any given afternoon and stroll casually among groups of students, audit their seminars and classes, and take part in late evening student discussions, the frequent cautions, from all quarters, against "isolationism" may not seem warranted. As was pointed out earlier, there was a time at the College of the Holy Cross when formal structures and procedures for guaranteeing that the student viewpoint be heard hardly seemed necessary. It is likely that the same was true at many

small colleges and universities across the country. Faculties and student bodies were readily available to one another and the cohesiveness of the academic community resulted in certain known constants at all times. The Jesuit faculty at Holy Cross knew very well when the students were tired, agitated, bored, or jubilant. The student body at Holy Cross knew clearly where the Jesuit faculty stood on issues of parietals, grades, the value of the core curriculum, authority in the Church, and the like.

The contemporary situation is very different, of course. The student body and the faculty manifest cohesiveness or unity on very few issues. A plurality of viewpoints abounds both among the students and the faculty, including the Jesuit members of the faculty. The academic administrator can become quite helpless in his isolation from all but a few student viewpoints -- usually those of students who happen to occupy elected positions of leadership in the student government, or who write the editorials in the student paper, or who appeal academic or disciplinary dismissal. Such a basis is inadequate for effective academic leadership.

Isolation from students, of this sort, produces two disabling effects on the potential influence of the administrator: (1) lacking firsthand knowledge of student viewpoints, the administrator may be inclined to make decisions in a vacuum; (2) like all leaders who lose touch with their followers, the adminis-

trator may discover that there is no base of influence from which to act effectively. The argument is not that the administrator must agree with the student viewpoint; but he must know that it exists. Likewise the viewpoint of the administrator should be known to the students.

Frankel put it right, perhaps:

> Formal sermons on rights and responsibilities tend to mount in number and shrillness, I suspect, in direct proportion to the absence of close consultation and cooperation between students, faculty, and administration. There is no reason, indeed, why the code of rights and responsibilities that govern a college, and the systems of sanctions that enforce it, should not themselves be a product of cooperative study and effort by members of these three groups.

Isolation can breed an unhealthy arrogance and contempt for others: administrators for students, students for administrators. (Mayhew) It is all very well for administrators to say of students, or students of administrators, "If they don't like it, they can go elsewhere." The fact is that there is strong pressure on both to stay put and the geographical solution (i.e., moving away) rarely solves anything.

Given the realities of the campus today, prudence alone would seem to dictate the need for administrators to work towards establishing formal procedures for close and continuing consultation with students. It has, of course, been pointed out in more than one instance that regular procedures for student par-

ticipation, however minimal, might have lessened the extent of difficulties in recent years.

There are other grounds on which the administrator, it seems, may justify student involvement in academic decision making.

Edward D. Eddy, Jr., has suggested that, even if the student is viewed primarily as a consumer rather than a participant, nevertheless, "we can take the cue from business and industry . . . Controlled consumer reaction never hurt any business and certainly won't destroy the integrity of any educational institution." Students in many private, liberal arts colleges, like Holy Cross, bear a large part of the operating costs through tuition payments, Their views of the institution, favorable or unfavorable, may well affect the drawing power of the college in the future. The reaction of a disaffected or highly enthusiastic graduate or two may not be of any great significance. The impressions of large numbers of graduates, however, will constitute the principal demonstration of the academic strength and quality of the college as a whole. An administrator would ignore this potential influence at no small risk to the institution.

Is it possible, however, for the administrator to meet the objections of those who oppose student participation on the grounds of insufficient competency and responsibility?

Clearly it cannot be claimed that students are as compe-

tent in <u>every</u> aspect of academic decision making as are members of the faculty and administration. Students at Holy Cross have not put forward any such claims. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between those competencies which are beyond the immediate grasp of students (e.g., academic qualifications in a given field of study, or in curricular theory or educational philosophy) and those competencies which can be learned (e.g., institutional structures and procedures, committee rules, familiarity with the history of campus issues). Competency in the latter areas may not come quickly or easily, but some students have demonstrated a proficiency in some of these areas no less than that of members of the faculty and administration.

The suggestion that there be parallel structures for faculty and student competencies (each group concerning itself with its own interests) has received extended discussion on many campuses, including Holy Cross, and has frequently been rejected on the grounds that, too often, the range of issues in which each of the two groups has <u>exclusive</u> concern is very limited. The parallel structures approach to college decision making might result in isolationism and uninformed discussion in both groups. Student governments, left to function in isolation, have often been marked by too great a concern with trivia, elections characterized by sparse turn-out and little evidence of the democratic process, and activities widely ignored by everyone. (Shaffer)

To what extent can administrators regard students as truly responsible participants?

Again, the claim cannot be made that students want to share the same degree of responsibility or accountability as faculty members or administrators. As the President of Yale remarked: "I do not think the great majority of students want to spend very much of their time or energy in the guidance and governance of their university." (Brewster) Most students are capable of distinguishing between the responsibilities of those who have to answer to a wide and diverse constituency (e.g., a president or dean) and those who have to answer only to their peers or close associates.

In facing the objection that students cannot assume responsibility for decisions, the administrator should point out that not the least aim of most institutions of higher education is the fostering of responsible decision making. The catalog of the College of the Holy Cross states that it is the intent of the College to create a "formal educational context in which all concerned may . . . move towards the most basic human decisions." In evaluating the practice of student involvement at the College it became clear that the mode of participation provided the occasion for students to grow in an understanding of the demands of responsibility and the accountability involved in every important decision.

Student involvement in academic decisions that omitted

or made light of the need for accountability would not be consonant with sound educational objectives; on the other hand, administrators should give due recognition to the truth of John Dewey's observation that there is a strong relationship in education between effort and involvement. Responsibility for basic decisions and, therefore, increasing opportunity to exercise responsibility and be held accountable should be shared by all the members of the academic community, including students. No one should have it both ways. It is interesting to read in Archie R. Dykes' study of "Faculty Participation in Academic Decision Making":

> One of the most noticeable and best documented findings of the investigation is the existence of a pervasive ambivalence in faculty attitudes toward participation in decision making. The faculty members interviewed overwhelmingly indicated the faculty should have a strong, active, and influential role in decisions, especially in those areas directly related to the educational function of the university. At the same time, the respondents revealed a strong reticence to give the time such a role would require. Asserting that faculty participation is essential, they placed participation at the bottom of their professional priority list and deprecated their colleagues who do participate.

Given time to know what is expected of them and to gain a perspective which experience alone can afford, there is no reason to assume that students cannot exercise responsibility in proportion to their degree of participation.

CONCLUSION

There are, obviously, no universal blueprints for student participation. The peculiar traditions, size, and related local factors at the College of the Holy Cross have weighed heavily in the determination of the present mode of student participation at this institution.

While it is to be expected that the modalities of participation will undergo further revisions -- with an increase of involvement in some instances and a diminution of student influence in others -- academic administrators at Holy Cross and elsewhere are not likely to forego the real and potential benefits to their effective leadership that such participation can offer.

It is not at all clear that the conventional model of political democracy is the future of the college or the university. It is, perhaps, more likely that power and authority will go to those who know and can communicate a sense of direction rather than to representatives of any constituency: administrative, faculty, or students. The language of negotiation does not ring as sure a sound as the language of responsible dialogue. The administrator's best chances for the latter are to be found in regular procedures for student participation.

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